THE Freeholders Choice: OR, A LETTER OF ADVICE Concerning ELECTIONS.

SIR,

I Received yours of the 12*th* Inſtant, and am fully of your mind, That if our Repreſentatives cannot be ſuffered to make Laws to regulate Elections, we muſt ſupply that defect by ſome Contract amongſt our ſelves, whereby all unneceſſary charge may be prevented, as of late has been done in moſt Counties in the caſe of Sheriffs; for otherwiſe the preſent Deſign of ſuch frequent changes of Parliaments, may prove as pernicious to the peoples Intereſt, as the perpetuating of One. Our Grandees do now ſee that they did outſhoot themſelves, and are full of repentance for their raſh and haſty Diſſolution of the late Odious over-long Parliament, and are therefore attempting to retrieve that error by tiring out the people with frequent changes, till they can get another for their

 tooth,

tooth, as managable and mercenary as the former. And therefore to obviate this miſchief, we muſt make Elections eaſie both to the Chuſers and the Choſen. To conſider of which, as alſo to contrive the management at a publick Charge, of all abuſes by Mayors, Bailiffs, and Sheriffs, in making double and falſe Returns, and all other undue and illegal practiſes; I ſhall with the reſt of the Gentlemen in theſe parts, give you the meeting you deſire.

I find all perſons very forward to countenance this publick work, except the high-flown Ritualiſts and Ceremony-mongers of the Clergy, who being in the Conſpiracy againſt the people, lay out themſelves to accommodate their Maſters with the veriſt Villains that can be pickt up in all the Countrey, that ſo we may fall into the hands again of as Treacherous and Lewd a Parliament as the Wiſdom of God and Folly of man has moſt miraculouſly freed us from. To which end they traduce all worthy men for *Fanaticks*, *Schiſmaticks*, or favourers of them: nay, do but pitch upon a Gentleman that believes it his duty to ſerve his God, his King and Countrey faithfully, they cry him down as a perſon dangerous and diſaffected to the Government, thinking hereby to ſcare the people from the freedom of their Choice, and then impoſe their hair-brain'd Journey-men and half-witted Fobs upon them.

Wherefore I think it no leſs than a duty incumbent on us, in this time of publick danger, to expoſe theſe blind leaders of the blind, with their deſigned Conſpiracy, to the peoples view, and to wipe off that little paint that is upon them, that the whole Nation ſeeing them in their proper colours, may have that contempt and ſcorn for them which they deſerve.

For as no love nor kindneſs from Chriſtians, can be too much to ſuch Miniſters of the Goſpel as ſhall diligently and faithfully diſcharge their duties, without officiouſly involving and turmoiling themſelves in Secular affairs; ſo when they ſhall deſert their own ſtation, and prove curſed Inſtruments in the hands of their managers, of Cruelty, Rapine, and Oppreſſion of a people, inſtead of preaching up the good tidings of peace and happineſs to mankind, they then become a Den of thieves, and ought to be eſteemed by all Lovers of their Countrey, as unnatural and publick diſturbers of its peace and welfare.

By their Office, indeed, they are the ſalt of the earth, but having loſt their ſavour, they are thenceforth good for nothing, but to be caſt out and trodden under foot of men, as our Saviour teaches. For pray now, becauſe we ought to honour and moſt tenderly affect thoſe that lay out themſelves and Talents for the ſalvation of our ſouls; does it therefore follow that we muſt bear the ſame reſpect to ſuch as endeavour the deſtruction of our bodies and eſtates? God forbid that ſo brutal an inference ſhould infect the minds of men! A good Phyſician that adminiſters wholeſome and ſound Medicines, ought to be rewarded; but an ignorant or knaviſh Quack, that gives us poyſon inſtead of phyſick, deſerves an halter, though he has the Colledg-Licenſe.

St.

x1942.06
Cl255
v.1 14

St. *James* put a pertinent and honeſt queſtion to the Chriſtians of his time, *From whence come wars and fightings amongſt you?* And were he now alive to repeat it, all *Europe* would anſwer him with one voice, *From Knaviſh and Time-ſerving Prieſts, who conſulting their own Secular advantage, and to heap up to themſelves a worldly Maſs of Wealth, of Grandeur, and of Power, have deſigned to make all people ſlaves to their Princes, and Princes ſlaves to themſelves.*

Theſe Traitors of the Goſpel have deſerted the plain paths of Righteouſneſs, and betaken themſelves to a Serpentine courſe of creeping into Courts, and there have created and fomented miſunderſtandings and jealouſies betwixt governing-Powers and their Subjects, that thereby they might ſeemingly become neceſſary to the one, and have an opportunity of pillaging, oppreſſing, and domineering over the other. 'Tis theſe Sons of *Belial* who in all ages have endeavoured to corrupt and ſtain the generous minds of Princes with Arbitrary and unmanly Maxims of Government and State, and have framed for them the weak Policies of Cruelty, Craft, Treachery, and formal Devotion, inſtead of Protection, Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Righteouſneſs, which alone can eſtabliſh a Nation; inſomuch that Magiſtracy, which ought to watch for the good of the people, is fain to be watcht by the people, leſt it ruine and undo them. 'Tis theſe Wolves in ſheeps cloathing, who have eaten up the people of God like bread, and in all parts of the Chriſtian world have ſpirited the making, and edg'd the execution of Perſecuting and Sanguinary Laws: Wherefore I believe good Father *Jacob* had a foreſight of theſe ſons of *Levi*, when in his Laſt Will and Teſtament he left them a Curſe for a Legacy, inſtead of a Bleſſing; and if the whole world were now to make their Wills, all but Knaves and Fools would do the like.

You may eaſily call to mind a late Inſtance of the Humanity and Conſcience of this Race of men here in *England:* For when His Majeſty not long ſince Attempted to follow his own Inclinations, and emitted a Declaration of Indulgence to tender Conſciences, the whole *Poſſe Cleri* ſeemed to be Raiſed againſt him: Every *Reader* and *Gibeonite* of the Church could then talk as ſaucily of their King, as they do now of the late Honourable Parliament; nay, they began to ſtand upon their Terms, and delivered it out as Orthodox Doctrine, That the King was to Act according to Law, and therefore could not ſuſpend a Pœnal Statute, that the Subjects Obedience was a Legal Obedience; and therefore if the King commanded any thing contrary to Law, the Subject was not bound to obey; with ſo many other honeſt Poſitions, that men wondred in God how ſuch Knaves ſhould come by them. But wherefore was all this Wrath, and all this Doctrine? Meerly becauſe His Majeſty was pleaſed for a time to remove the ſore backs of Diſſenters from under the Eccleſiaſtical laſh; the bloody exerciſe of which, is never denied to Holy Church, but the Magiſtrate is immediately aſſaulted with the noiſe and clamour of *Demetrius* and his Crafts-men.

But

But now the Tables being turned, the ſame mercenary Tongues are again all *Sibthorp*, and all *Mannering*, not a bit of Law or Conſcience either, is now to be had for love or money, nor any limits to be put to the Kings Commands, or our Obedience: 'Tis a Goſpel-Truth with theſe men, That all which we have is the Kings; and if he ſhould command our Eſtates, our Wives and Children, yea, and our Religion too, we ought to Reſign them up, ſubmit, and be ſilent. And therefore in the approaching Elections, of all men, I would avoid ſuch as are recommended by theſe *Sycophants*, leſt ſuch damnable Doctrine ſhould crawl from the Pulpit, into the Parliament-Houſe, to the deſtruction of Religion, and utter ruin of the State.

F I N I S.